

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1094

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UNCLAS BELFAST 368

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, U.K. (N.I.)

SUBJECT: GOVERNMENT CLOSES OFFICIAL INCIDENT CENTERS

REF: (A) LONDON 16931 (B) BELFAST 51

1. NORTHER IRELAND OFFICE ANNOUNCED NOV. 12 CLOSING OF SEVEN OFFICIAL INCIDENT CENTERS ESTABLISHED LAST FEBRUARY IN SEVERAL CITIES TO FACILITATE AND MONITOR PROVISIONAL IRA CEASEFIRE (REFTEL B). SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND MERLYN REES HAD COMMENTED IN PASSING DURING COMMONS ADDRESS (REFTEL A) THAT HE STUDYING CONTINUED USEFULNESS OF INCIDENT CENTERS IN LIGHT CHANGE IN NATURE OF VIOLENCE DURING PAST SEVERAL MONTHS. PROVISIONAL SINN FEIN, WHICH MAINTAINS MANY MORE INCIDENT CENTERS THROUGHOUT PROVINCE, IN STATEMENT MINIMIZED IMPORTANCE OF OFFICIAL CENTERS CLOSING AND AFFIRMED PROVISIONAL FACILITIES WOULD REMAIN OPEN AS ADVICE CENTERS. PROVISIONAL SINN FEIN REPEATED AD IN IRISH NEWS NOV. 12 GIVING TELEPHONE NUMBERS EIGHT BELFAST CENTERS. PROVISIONAL SINN FEIN SPOKESMAN JAMES DRUMM DOUBTED CLOSURE WOULD CAUSE CEASEFIRE ("TRUCE") TO BE ENDED.

2. LOYALIST REACTION GENERALLY FAVOURABLE BUT IT APPARENT THEY AND OTHERS SOMEWHAT PUZZLED BY DECISION PARTICULARLY SINCE TWENTY MORE REPUBLICAN DETAINEES RELEASED YESTERDAY LEAVING UNCLASSIFIED

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123 DETAINED. IAN PAISLEY DESCRIBED CLOSURE AS REES REACTION

TO THE SPREAD OF THE IRA BOMBING CAMPAIGN TO LONDON. REPUBLICAN CLUBS (POLITICAL ARM OF OFFICIAL IRA IN NORTH) JEERED THAT REES "MANIPULATED" THE PROVISIONALS INTO ACTING AS POLICEMEN AND THEN HUNG UP THE PHONE ON THEM. SEVERAL COMMENTATORS HAVE POINTED OUT CLOSURE OF INCIDENT CENTERS DOES NOT NECESSARILY BREAK COMMUNISTS BETWEEN PROVISIONALS AND CIVIL SERVANTS BY OTHER CHANNELS.

3. THERE SOME RUMORS, OR WISHFUL THINKING AMONG BELFAST LOYALISTS THAT CLOSING INCIDENT CENTERS HERALDS NEW SECURITY CAMPAIGN AGAINST PROVISIONAL IRA. CONGEN BELIEVES INITIATIVE CONTINUES LIE WITH PROVISIONALS. GIVEN THREE GREAT IFS, IF CAMPAIGN AGAINST PROVISIONALS LAUNCHED, IF IT SUCCESSFUL AND IF IT SUCCESSFUL WITHOUT ANTAGONIZING MASS OF CATHOLIC COMMUNITY THEN LONG-TERM POLITICAL OUTLOOK FOR "ULSTER" WOULD BE MUCH BRIGHTER. THE MOOD OF THE MASS OF BELFAST CATHOLICS IN VIEW NEW TERROR OF PROVISIONAL-OFFICIAL IRA FEUD WOULD PROBABLY NOW FAVOR SUCH AN INITIATIVE. IT DOUBTFUL THIS MOOD WOULD BE SUSTAINED HOWEVER IN FACE TACTICAL NECESSITIES OF EFFECTIVE ARMY/POLICE ANTI-IRA CAMPAIGN.

4. WEST BELFAST CATHOLIC AREAS INCONVENIENCED NOV. 13 BY STOPPAGE 300 "BLACK" TAXIS IN PROTEST BY DRIVERS OVER KILLING CHAIRMAN FALLS TAXI ASSOCIATION NOV. 12. BLACK TAXIS PROVIDE MASS TRANSIT SERVICES AS ALTERNATE TO BUSES AND IT RUMORED BELFAST ASSOCIATION PAYS DUES TO PROVISIONALS.
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